General Audiences

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Gen

Project Hail Mary - Andy Weir
Project Hail Mary (2026)

Ryland Grace & Rocky

Ryland Grace
Rocky (Project Hail Mary)

Ryland Grace & Rocky are Best Friends
Ryland Grace Needs a Hug
Ryland Grace Acts Like a Wet Cat
Fluff
Platonic Cuddling
Platonic Soulmates
Sweet
Affection
Cuddling & Snuggling
Asexual Character
Asexual Ryland Grace
English ← Previous Work Part 2 of Platonic cuddling Next Work →

On such a timeless flight

Likelightinglass

Summary:

Grace is enjoying their new routine.

Nothing beats a snuggly best friend.

Notes:

I can't get these two out of my head. Ryland Grace needs as many hugs as possible. I'm doing my part.

Decided to make this a series with its lonely out in space. Maybe more to come! All the cuddles.

Enjoy!

(See the end of the work for other works inspired by this one (#children) .)

I love the new routine.

There's a designated “snuggle spot” (as I secretly refer to them) in the original location by the lab and another, as promised, in the dormitory. Specifically, a xenonite tunnel and platform beside my bed, the membrane between us so

Rocky can sit right next to me while I'm sleeping. The wall of the ship is on the other side of me so I sleep “between a rock and a hard place”, ha!

My idiom based jokes are wasted on him. I didn't even get a pity laugh, even when I explained to him how funny it was.

I've been researching a lot in my spare time in psychology journals, trying to figure out exactly how insane I'm going to be in a few years. Without Rocky, I know I'd already have completely lost it. Had things been different and I was en route to Earth all by myself, I would have ended up putting myself back in the coma, I'm sure of it.

At his insistence, I've been reading out loud from the articles from the laptop supposedly so he can learn “health needs” but it's mostly so he can learn the best opportunities to boss me around more. Lots of “Grumpy. Angry. Sad question? Too long since last cuddle question?” Also for someone who literally made me read out five thousand words on human self esteem he sure still throws around “why stupid question?” a heck of a lot.

Most of my daily emotions are torn between annoyance at him mother-henning me, pouting at him being mean to me, and bursting full of love that I have a best friend who cares about me with so much intensity it hurts.

The love usually wins.

Usually.

We talk about Erid a lot. Rocky is, of course, getting excited to be back with his mate and his family and friends and, you know. Going outside. Running around big endless expanses. Must be nice. (*Don't think about it don't think about it don't think about it.*) I read the textbooks. Ignoring is a kind of coping mechanism.

He tells me his people will take care of me and figure out how to synthesize everything I need to stay alive. He seems so sure of it…I hope he's right. I know I'd not be able to make the same kind of assurances about how he'd be treated on Earth if our situations were reversed.

Maybe cuddling the human will be one of the attractions of the little zoo exhibit he's going to put me in.

No, that's unkind. The truth is, the things he tells me he and the rest of Erid are going to do for me makes me too hopeful. But it beats the alternative of trying to convince myself I'm okay with the idea of starving to death in orbit around his planet after I drop him off.

At least bedtime cuddling is awesome. Easily the best distraction from being trapped in a metal tube hurtling through space.

I can't believe I was ready to turn down the offer of getting it nightly. He hasn't grown bored with it yet, at least, and I think he likes it too. Eridians just don't really have that physical contact drive, they don't have skin like humans that evolved to reward touch and warmth. He says general proximity and company of others are more important to him, even on the other side of a wall. He can hear me no matter where I am on the ship, and I always watch him sleep. I think I make it abundantly clear I would do anything for him, so I believe he'd tell me if there was anything he was missing that I could provide. I also tell him I love him all the time, and I know he likes hearing that.

But I think he gets a kick out of how responsive I am to touch, after going so long without it I'm addicted to the closeness. He redesigned the material to be extra stretchy and did something to the insulation to keep it the perfect level of heat without being a complete furnace.

“All humans like this question?” he asks me one night, interrupting my massage. He's stopped what he's doing to chat for some reason, but I'm not in the mood for a culture lesson while not being touched.

“Like what?” I ask. I'm lying on my front with my head facing away so I blindly reach back behind me to grab an arm and pull it down next to me. I wrap my arms around it like a plush toy and press my face against the heat of the membrane.

There, now he's trapped.

“Need word to describe you.”

“You already have the words. Amazing, smart, funny.”

I hear the trilling notes of his laugh. *“Emotional state in balance again question?”*

“Yes,” I say. I'm in a great mood. Then I hum the notes for yes as best I can and try for a high note chirp used for positive emphasis. I don't sound anything at all like I'm speaking Eridian but I think he finds it funny.

“Exactly, this, need word for my feeling. When you in good mood, act happy, be funny in different way than usual dumb jokes. Specific type of love feeling.”

Aww. My chest hurts from being so happy. “I'd say it means you think I'm being cute.”

He tells me how he feels in his language and I mentally log it as “you're adorable”.

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I didn't really have a lot of this back on Earth. There was a teacher at the school who gave really awesome hugs, including a nice little shoulder squeeze when parting away. Dimitri had big bear hugs and liked to lock arms with me while walking. I had exactly one disastrous relationship with a live in girlfriend who was usually disappointed in me when I was more interested in kisses and cuddles in bed than the other stuff humans like to do in the bedroom. But darn did she give a great shoulder massage. Even the firm pressure of Stratt's hand on my back when she guided me into conference rooms I didn't want to be in was an enjoyably grounding sensation.

I can't pretend Rocky is human, or that I'm getting the benefits my human body evolved to receive from actual skin on skin contact with other humans, but I feel psychologically an order of magnitude better than I did before I figured out how much I needed affection.

Anatomy is different, the medium was literally just invented, and he has zero cultural context besides what I read from the computer or try to describe from personal experience. But it's enough to just have enjoyable physical sensations again and closeness with the person I love most.

The hair playing is a particular recent delight. My hair has grown out enough that it feels great being twisted and tugged a little.

I'm going to keep my hair shaggy for maximum effect. And I'm planning to 3D print a hairbrush for him to use, since he can't really manage the fine scratches I'd like with his anatomy and the barrier. Or I could go get Illy's actual hairbrush. Would that be weird, pillaging her personal stuff? I feel like she'd have been on board with any ideas to help enhance my regularly scheduled alien snuggle time. She was a weirdo. I miss her.

Yeah, the hairbrush was a great call. There's this really nice thing he's started doing where he scratches right behind my ears and then down to the nape of my neck slowly. It sends immediate tingles down my spine and repeating it a bunch all at once makes me feel all shivery and sappy enough to make those almost Eridian sounding happy hums.

Which I am then told is adorable.

I'm usually out like a light after that.

It doesn't take up all that much of Rocky's time. He waits a little until after I fall asleep to untangle me and then work on something while he watches me. Well, sometimes he does. Apparently there have been occasions where I reached out in my sleep and attempted to trap him with me so when that happens he just stays attached. I'm glad that barrier is

unbreakable and there's no risk I'm going to blast myself in the face with ammonia tearing through it when I grasp out half asleep to hold on to my big rock spider pillow.

Needless to say, I'm getting some amazing sleep lately. And when I dream, I dream of warmth, and safety, and home.

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I'm hanging in the control room watching our course and he's in his ball, punching away with a stylus in a journal. He's making marks that are a little like Braille. It's the written form of Eridianese, and I know he doesn't need notes to remember things himself so it must be something he is writing for posterity.

"I want to learn that," I say. I'm typing away on my laptop at the same time, drafting some notes for a history of the mission I want to finish sometime before I go insane and/or die. The Eridians can include it if and when they ever decide to send contact to Earth. "Hey," I say when he ignores me, and tap the xenonite over the journal a bunch of times to annoy him. "I want to learn how to do that."

"Learn how to be quiet while others work question? Easy, start with closing mouth."

"Mean," I say. "What are you writing about?"

He does a whistle the equivalent of a sigh. *"Instructions we need to be ready to give Erid once we go home. Once I complete, I will teach reading to you and you review for accuracy. But will take time to complete this. More if you annoy me."*

"Instructions for what? I thought we were going to drop the Taumoeba off at Threeworld first. It doesn't make sense to tell Erid what to do and then to wait for your people to send another mission."

"Yes, correct, this is plan. This writing not about Taumoeba."

"Then…what? Docking instructions with the ship? We have to wait until your space elevator is in range to figure that out so how are you going to give them that book?"

"You very stupid today. What other big important thing Erid need to know about you think?"

It honestly takes me a few seconds of confusion, in which I cement myself as the dumbest living organism on this ship, before it hits me. "Oh. Me." I forgot my existence will be coming as something of a shock when their wayward astronaut comes home with a stray from another star system.

"Instructions for needs of humans. Habitat needs and nutrition needs most important. Then general health and comfort needs. If information good and detailed enough I give journals to scientist at space elevator and they start work right away. No time for any delay, will express work on food supply needs must be immediate."

Rocky is writing a care and keeping of humans guide. I cry just a little bit, and it's the first time in two days! Sticking to my average goal of once a day. There are no mental health issues in this body.

"You really think your people are going to help me? I mean, even if they want to. Do you think it's possible?"

"Will have best scientists on planet gather in thrum. Will save Grace, make able to live on Erid."

He's told me a little about thrums before, and they sound pretty cool. A bunch of Eridians congregate over an issue and become like individual neurons in a big brain working the problem.

"So the books are what you'll present to the thrum, and everyone figures out how to make it happen?"

“Somewhat like that. Slightly slower with reading out information and then thrumming for conclusions than presenting firsthand knowledge, but still effective. Why notes and instructions must be very accurate and clear.”

I'm confused. “Why wouldn't you be presenting?”

“How I initiate thrum while in space question?”

“You'll be home.”

“Will be here. On Hail Mary. With Grace.”

Does he really mean… “No. I take you home to Erid. If your scientists can help me and feed me and bring me down somehow, great. But you need to go home. Be with Adrian.”

“Adrian will come on elevator. Maybe new station, or small ship from Erid to connect, will need to be decided. Will meet with anyone necessary in orbit. They will understand.”

Rocky is planning to stay up in space with me, even after he can just go home to the surface. I start crying, my vision blurs as hot tears roll down ny face. For the sake of my averages, I'm rolling this into my one alloted sob today.

“Are you sure?” I say with a sniff.

“Certain. Grace will not be alone again. When our home completed if I need to leave to inspect, Adrian will come here, or maybe my siblings. Watch you sleep. Then we bring you home to Erid.”

Home. To Erid. With Rocky. And his family. Maybe my family then, too.

“I want to hear about your plans,” I say. “What you'll make me.”

“Tell me about home.”

Series this work belongs to:

- ← Previous Work (http://archiveofourown.org/works/81516836) Part 2 of Platonic cuddling (http://archiveofourown.org/series/5891781) Next Work → (http://archiveofourown.org/works/82068196)

Works inspired by this one:

- [Podfic] On such a timeless flight (https://archiveofourown.org/works/83626496) by Flowerparrish Pods (Flowerparrish) (http://archiveofourown.org/users/Flowerparrish/pseuds/Flowerparrish%20Pods)

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